

REMARKS

At the outset, the Examiner is thanked for the thorough review and consideration of the pending application. The office action dated April 23, 2003, has been received and its contents carefully reviewed.

In the Office Action, claims 9 and 16-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,259,505 B1 to Makino (hereinafter "Makino"). Applicants hereby traverse these rejections for the reasons set forth below.

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for allowing claims 1-8, 10-15 and 19-21 and for the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 22-24. Claims 22 and 24 are rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim 9. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests the allowance of these claims. Applicants amend claim 9 to include the limitation of allowable claim 23, and cancel claim 23. Thus, claims 1-22 and 24 are pending.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 9 and claims 16-18, which depend from claim 9, are allowable over the cited references.

Applicants believe the foregoing amendments place the application in condition for allowance and early, favorable action is respectfully solicited.

If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned attorney at (202) 496-7500 to discuss the steps necessary for placing the application in condition for allowance. All correspondence should continue to be sent to the below-listed address.

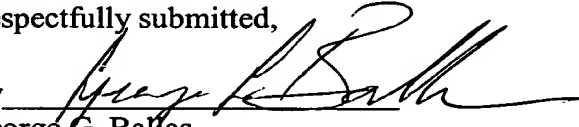
Application No.: 09/653,202
Amendment dated March 14, 2005
Reply to Office Action dated December 14, 2004

Docket No.: 8733.291.00-US

If these papers are not considered timely filed by the Patent and Trademark Office, then a petition is hereby made under 37 C.F.R. §1.136, and any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 for any necessary extension of time, or any other fees required to complete the filing of this response, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0911. Please credit any overpayment to deposit Account No. 50-0911. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

Dated: March 14, 2005

Respectfully submitted,

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